

Mastering the Sai



Dr. Ted Gambordella



Introduction

I began my training in the martial arts over fourteen years ago in the little town of Alexandria, Louisiana. From the first I was interested in weapons, but I had great difficulty in finding any but a handful of people who knew anything about weapons. For many years I was only able to acquire little bits of weapons training from various teachers here and there. I tried to learn all that I could from books, but found that the number of books on weapons is almost as short in supply as the number of instructors with a knowledge of weapons. I also found that most of the books about weapons were written by the same man and were incomplete in their depth, for no books were available on the tonfa or the yawara, and only a few were available on the staff, the bo, and the knife. There seemed to be numerous books on the nunchaku, most poorly done, and a few books on the sai; but all in all the books available for the martial art student who was interested in weapons were few and far between.

So I decided to write my own books. I spent the last four years doing research and training with weapons, learning their use and applications. I was able to achieve a fourth degree black belt in weapons (kubojitsu), I had already written four other books and a movie script, "The Leopard," so I was familiar with what was necessary to write a good book. I wanted my book to have techniques that a beginner could learn, but that a teacher could also benefit from. I wanted to make the book easy to follow by avoiding any overuse of photos or confusing text. I wanted to include a basic practice Kata for each weapon, as well as techniques for the weapon's offensive and defensive use. Finally, I wanted to write a book that would serve as a manual on weapons for years to come—a book that a student or a teacher would be proud to own and would refer to whenever they had a question on weapons or wanted a new technique.

I feel that I have accomplished all of these goals in this book, The Complete Book of Karate Weapons. It is a book that I am proud of and one that you can be proud to have in your library. If you will read this book with an open mind and follow the techniques and exercises described herein, you can make yourself one of the few experts with weapons in the world today.

I could never have written this book without the help of many friends and fellow martial artists who appear with me in the instructional photos, both as technique partners and technical advisers. These men, some of the most outstanding black belts in the South, include: **Keith Yates:** fourth degree black belt. Winner of many kata championships and weapons kata championships at the top tournaments of the South. A master artist who also designed the cover of the book.

James Toney: fifth degree black belt. Teacher extraordinaire and tournament champion for many years. One of the most respected teachers in Texas.

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Barry Guimbellot: third degree black belt. Probably the most successful teacher in Dallas, an outstanding example of character and leadership in karate.

Steve Weiss: second degree black belt. A modern jiu-jitsu expert who is also an expert in karate.

Ross Comerski: first degree black belt. A giant of a man and a giant of a teacher.

Finally, I must thank all of my teachers through my years of training for their help and knowledge, such great men as: Soke R. Sacharnoski, Soke A. Church, Soke K. Marx, Master HeYoung Kimm, Shihan B. Pearson, Dr. J. Marler, and Sensi B. Hathorn. These great men and excellent teachers gave the knowledge and training that enabled me to get to where I am today. I am forever grateful to them and their arts.

Last, let me take a moment to thank the most important force in my life, my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Who gives me the strength and ability necessary to write this book and to share my knowledge with my fellow martial artists.

Dedication To Keith Yates, Jim Toney, Barry Guimbellot, Steve Weiss, Russ Comerski, and Steve Rich, without whom this book would never have been written.

Photos by Steve Rich

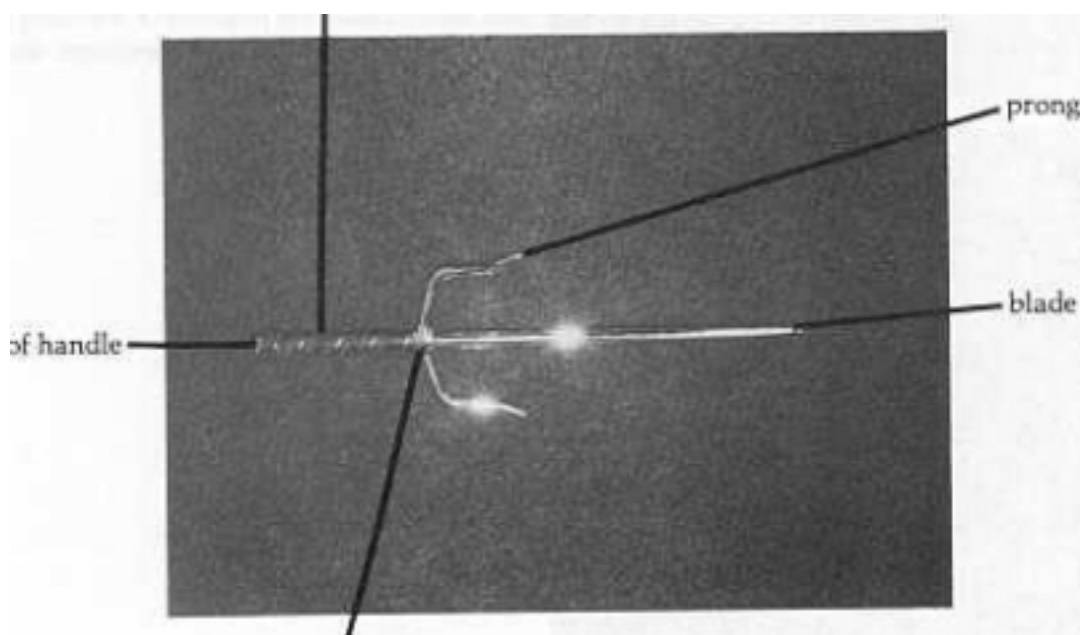


The Sai

The sai is a weapon that has gained popularity in recent years because of its beauty in weapons kata and because of its practicality and effectiveness as a weapon of the martial arts. The sai was originally used to plant rice and is still in use in some parts of the world today.

It consists of a piece of steel or heavy metal that is approximately twelve inches in length, with a pointed or blunted end, and two prongs handles that extend down the blade to form a handle and a protection for strikes. All parts of the sai are used as a weapon, the end or butt for striking, the blade, the prong, and even the handle.

With a little practice, the sai can become one of the most beautiful and dangerous weapons you can learn to use. It is considered an illegal weapon in several states, so check with your law enforcement agency before carrying it on your person or in your car.



Holding the Sai



Blade down the arm. hold the handle of the sai with the forefinger wrapped around the prong, touching the thumb.



Front view: The blade should extend down the forearm.



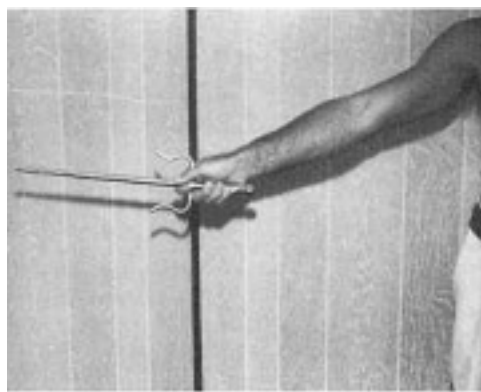
Side view: notice the position of the hand for the gripping. Fingers open with forefinger on top of the handle.

Sai gripped and extended down forearm.

Flipping the Sai



Starting position: holding the sai slightly pointed to the right hand side, begin to flip the wrist in a clockwise motion to the right.

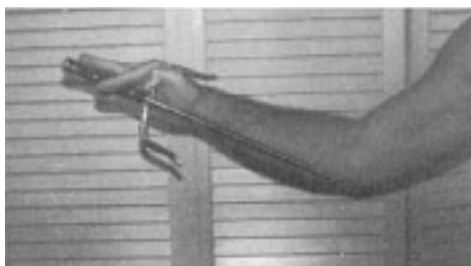


Middle of the flip: the blade is starting to come around and is supported by the thumb for leverage.

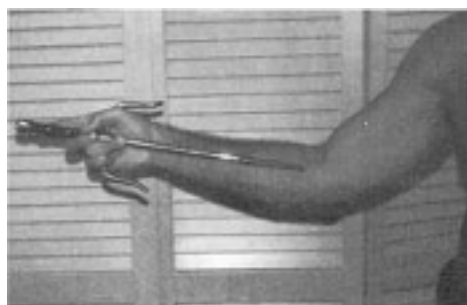


End of the flip: the blade is now in front, gripped with the thumb for control, and the forefinger is wrapped around the prong.

Close-ups of Flips with Sai



Sai being held down the arm, with three fingers wrapped around the handle and the forefinger down to the end of the handle.



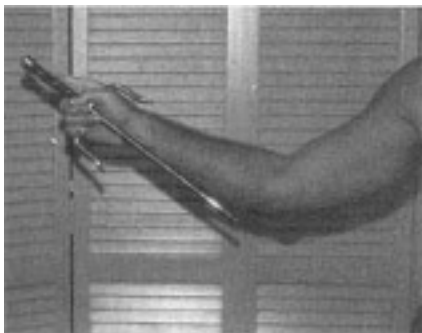
Lift all of the fingers and extend them down the handle to let the sai drop a little in your grip.

Then regrasp the handle with the last three fingers around the handle and the thumb near the prong.

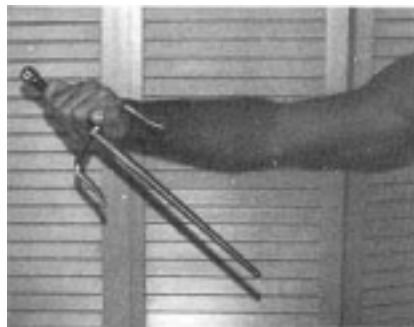


By now, the sai is horizontal and the wrist and fingers are facing away from the body; in other words, the wrist has turned completely around. Finish the flip by snapping the wrist back straight, and the sai will be pointed directly out in front of you. *(Note: it is very difficult to learn to flip a sai from a photo, but if you try yourself and then refer to the photos, you will be able to master the flipping.)*

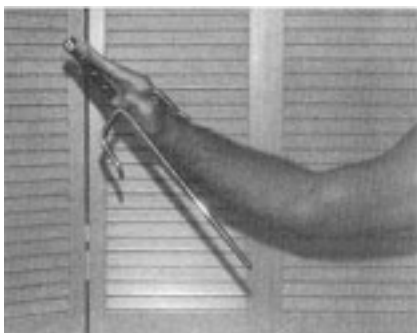
Close-up of the Overhead Flip



Begin with the sai held down the wrist.

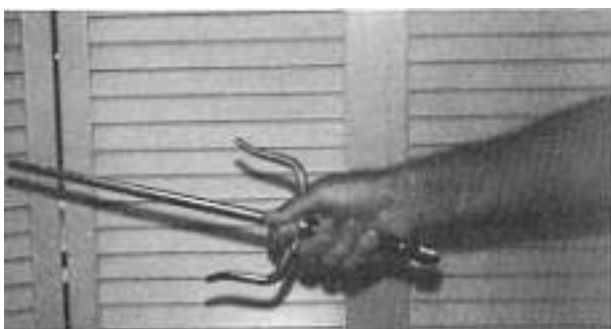


Now, slightly elevate the wrist and open the fingers so.



Grab the sai again. By now the fingers are around the front, and all are holding the sai that the wrist may begin to move around the sai.

Lean the wrist backward and slightly open the fingers.



Begin to snap down with the wrist until the sai is pointed directly out in front.

The Sai Flip Demonstrated



An example of a forward flip.



The left hand takes the sai and is flipping it forward.



Halfway through the move, the sai is cocked backward, and the fingers are down the blade ready to flip the sai.

To finish, the sai is held tightly again, straight out.

The Sai Overhead Flip Demonstrated



An Example of an overhead flip.



The right hand is flipping the sai for an overhead strike.



Halfway through the flip, the sai is pointed downward and the wrist is down with the fingers down the blade ready to flip the sai.

To finish, the sai is pointed outward and the grip is retightened.

Stances



Forward stance: the left hand has the sai down the forearm, and the right hand is up to protect and block the face. This stance is used for protection and defense from attack.



Blocking cat stance: here the sai is drawn in the left hand and is ready to be used for blocking.



Cat stance: this stance uses the left-handed sai for blocking, and the right arm is back for punching.

Natural stance: here, the feet are shoulder width and both sai are across in front of the body ready for movement to block or strike.



Stances



Rising block.



**Downward block stabbing:
used to block kicks.**



**Outer block, or wrist block:
used for blocking staff attacks and kicks.**

The X block: for the groin.



Stances



The modified cat stance block for the side: this blocks the middle body and the face.



The cat block with the sai down the arm.



The face block with the thrusting sai.

Blocks



The lower block or groin block.



The side block or cat stance block.



The middle block.

The side lower block:
used for blocking kicks.



Striking Positions & Striking Areas

The sai can be used as would a knife or short stick. All areas of the sai are lethal-the blade, the heel, the prongs, and the handle.



Driving the point into the eye.



Driving the heel into the mouth: take the end of the sai and drive it into the mouth of the attacker.



Driving the heel into the throat.

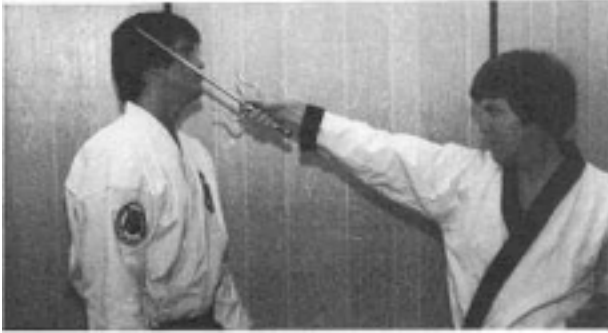


Driving the heel into the eye.



Driving the point into the abdomen.

Striking Positions & Striking Areas



Striking the face with the blade.

Driving the point and
blade into the groin.



Striking the groin with the heel.

Striking the solar plexus
with the heel.



Striking Positions & Striking Areas



Backhanded strike of blade into abdomen.



Drive the prong into the throat.



Drive the point into the throat.

Close-up of prong striking neck



Tearing the mouth with the prong.

Striking Positions & Striking Areas



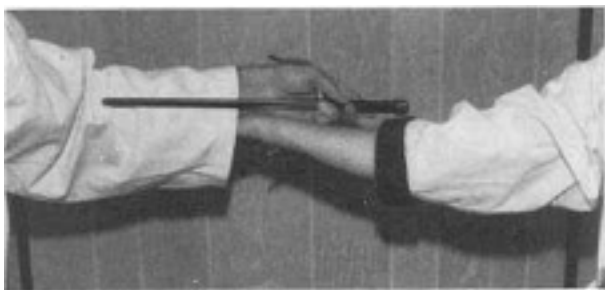
Driving the prong into the eye.



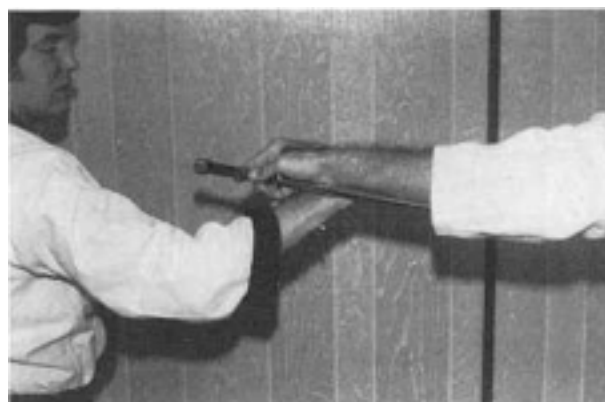
Driving the point into the eye.

Using the Sai for a Wrist Control

The sai is very effective for controlling and hurting the wrist. To do most wrist techniques with the sai, simply grab the wrist between the prong of the sai and the blade.



A front view of the sai grabbing the wrist.
Note: the prong is under the wrist, and the blade is across on top.



The back view of the sai grabbing the wrist.
Note: the blade is pressing on the wrist bone for pain.



A block with the sai and a wrist lock being applied.

Using the Sai for a Wrist Control



A rising block and a wrist lock being applied.

Techniques for Using the Sai for Defense



Ready for the punch.



Block the punch to the head with a rising block.



Follow up with a downward smash with the right sai into his groin.

Counter with a strike to the eye with the heel of the right sai.



This will cause him to lean over, and you can finish him with a stab to the back.

Techniques for Using the Sai for Defense



Ready to block the punch.



Block the punch by using a middle block with the left sai.



Counter by thrusting the right sai into his throat.

Finish him by smashing the right sai down into his groin.



Techniques for Using the Sai for Defense



Ready for the attack.



Block his punch with a middle block with the right sai.



Counter with a smash to the side of his head with the left sai.



Follow with a thrust of the heel of the right sai into his ear.



Now grab his gi with both hands and begin to throw him to the ground

As he starts to fall, finish him with a stab to the throat with the right sai.



Techniques for Using the Sai for Defense



Ready for the strike.



Block the overhead strike with an X block.



Finish with a double thrust into the eyes of the opponent.

Techniques for Using the Sai for Defense

Using the Sai to Stop a Kicking Attack



Ready for the kick.



Draw the righthand sai back for power to stop the kick.



Snap the sai down into the leg to break the skin.

Finish with a lefthand sai thrust to the abdomen.



Techniques for Using the Sai for Defense

Using the Sai to Stop a Kicking Attack



Ready for kick: stand in normal position with both sai in front of body.



Block the snap kick with an X block.



Finish with a right hand sai smash into the face.

Techniques for Using the Sai for Defense

Using the Sai to Stop a Kicking Attack



Ready for the kick: holding the sai in a side stance.



Flip the left sai down into the shin to stop the kick and break the shin bone.



Finish him with a strike of the right sai to the neck to smash his face.

Techniques for Using the Sai for Defense

Using the Sai to Stop a Kicking Attack



Ready for the block.



Use the double sai block to stop the roundhouse kick.



Finish with a thrust of the sai into the kidneys of your opponent.

Close-ups of Sai Blocks to the Leg to Stop Kicks & Control the Leg



The front hook block: lock the leg by jamming the prong of the sai against the lower ankle. Lock the leg by jamming the sai against the shin and ankle.



Block the kick by jamming the prong into the lower ankle, and follow up with a smash to the ankle bone with the other sai.



Block the front snap by jamming the prong down into the lower ankle part of the foot area.

Using the Sai to Stop an Attack from a Bo



Prepare to block the strike with the bo.



Block his overhead strike with a rising block with the right sai.



Counter by thrusting the left sai into his eye.

Unarmed Sai Defense



Ready to block the sai attack.



Use the X block to stop an attack to the face.



Continue to pull the right arm down and across the body, holding the wrist of the attacker to prevent escape. Follow up with a snap kick to the abdomen.

Unarmed Sai Defense



Ready to block.



Block his strike with the right sai with a rising block with your left arm.



Block his strike with the left sai with a right pressing block.

Counter with a snap kick to his groin.



Step behind his right leg and throw him to the ground, where you finish him with a stomp to the throat.

Unarmed Sai Defense



Ready for the attack.



Block his strike with a rising block with the left arm.



Block his counter with the right sai by using a crossing block.

Counter him with a swift and strong groin kick.



Now step into him and smash his abdomen with an elbow to the rear.



This will knock him down, where you finish him with a stomp to the ribs.



Unarmed Sai Defense



Ready to block the attack.



Block his right sai with a rising block with the left arm.



Now step into him and strike his throat with a right palm heel strike.

Grab his body and throw him over your hip to the ground.



Finish him with a strong shuto to the throat.

Unarmed Sai Defense



Ready to block his eye thrust with both sai.



Quickly drop to the ground underneath him and snap up your foot into his groin.

Defenses Against a Sai Using a Staff



Ready position: hold the staff down the right side.



Block the sai strike to the eyes with the staff, using an overhead smash to hit the sai with the staff.



Continue staff movement and strike back of his neck with the staff to finish him.

Defenses Against a Sai Using a Staff



Ready for attack. staff held down right side.



Block the sai with a double-handed block.



Continue to move the staff and strike into the abdomen while holding the sai away from the body with the left hand.

Follow up with a strike on the back of the neck to finish your attacker.



Defenses Against a Sai Using a Staff



Ready for attack: staff held down right leg.



Block the strike with the staff using an overhead smash.



Continue to move the staff in a downward circle and strike the knee of your opponent.



Come back up and strike into the abdomen and smash the ribs.



Finish with a kick to the head.

Kata



Kata



Kata



Kata

